

MAY 25 1965

FAR FROM MATA HARI TRADITION

Real James Bonds Are Dull

By LEON DENNEN
(Newspaper Enterprise Assn.)

NEW YORK — Pity the poor spy in the nuclear age.

The arrest of two more Americans, Robert Johnson and James Mintkenbaugh, charged with spying for Russia and the latest trial in London of a prominent engineer are more evidence that the ancient art of espionage is not as romantic as it used to be.

In our age of scientific mysteries and push buttons even a beautiful Mata Hari would need, in addition to her art as belly dancer, some knowledge of engineering, physics or photography to be of any use as a spy.

Thus, at least one of the Americans, James Mintkenbaugh, is reported to have received espionage training in Moscow in photography, secret writing and microdots.

Russia's spy in London, Frank Clifton Brossard, is, like many of his British predecessors, a highly trained engineer. Until his arrest he was an expert on guided missiles in the British Ministry of Aviation.

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Another military expert recently caught spying for Moscow was Sweden's Col. Stig Wennerstrom who had been supplying NATO secrets to Russia for 15 years. He served as an air attache in the United States from 1952 to 1957.

Equally expert are the Russians spying for the West. There is indeed more truth than poetry in the statement by Sen. Milton R. Young, R-N.D., that some

of the most valuable operatives of the American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) throughout the world "are actually high-ranking Communist party officials."

They are not too sold on communism and will work even for the United States "for a price," Young said.

Thus, Moscow's secret agent Yuri Nosenko, who is now believed to be in the United States, served as an adviser on nuclear weapons to the Soviet delegation at the Geneva disarmament conference.

Col. Oleg Penkovsky, another top Russian who spied for the West, was a competent scientist who belonged to the highest circles in Red Society. He had been supplying the United States with military information for two years before he was tracked down by the Soviet secret police.

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There is certainly little that is romantic about the modern spy. In the old days spying was as much an adventure as a lucrative business. But the spy in the nuclear age is primarily seduced by money. He is also afflicted with weak nerves. He confesses his crime the moment he is caught red-handed.

Colonel Penkovsky confessed that he spied for the United for the United States and Britain because he needed money. He went to his execution with head bowed.

Wennerstrom admitted working for the Russians for a similar unromantic reason and is doomed to spend the rest of his life in a Swedish prison.

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Or take the case of the venerable Professor Georgiev, Red Bulgaria's diplomat who confessed that he spied for the CIA in order to earn some extra change for his girl friend in France. Imagine Ian Fleming's dashing James Bond pleading in court as Professor Georgiev did:

"I beg you to give me the heaviest penalty. I am guilty of the greatest crime a Communist can possibly commit."

In the romantic days spies never confessed. Like Mata Hari they faced the firing squad proudly with their lips sealed.

Only rarely does one find spy these days who still operates in the grand tradition of Fouché, Napoleon's chief of intelligence. Fouché managed to take oaths of fidelity to seven different governments and live to tell the tale. He even survived Robespierre's revolutionary terror.

But the modern spy of our nuclear age, alas, if he does not confess, runs for his life at the first sign of danger, like Yuri Nosenko.

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